

IN THE DRAWINGS:

Please replace the original drawings with the replacement sheets submitted herewith. A marked-up copy of the drawings is submitted herewith to show the changes made. The replacement sheets are needed to show every feature of the invention specified in the claims, as discussed below.

REMARKS

The Official Action of 16 January 2007 has been carefully considered and reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The specification has been amended to correct errors of a clerical nature, and thereby to remove the bases for the objections on page 3 of the Official Action, and also to provide reference numerals for the features of the claimed locking means described in the specification as filed at page 4, lines 7-14. The drawings have been amended to include these features, which would have been clear to one of skill in the art from the aforementioned description in the specification as filed. Accordingly, the changes respectfully do not constitute new matter. The drawings have also been corrected more clearly to show that members 12a and 12b are welded to the proximal ends 27a and 27b (specification at page 3 lines 2-3) to enable operation of the device in accordance with the description at page 3, line 7 *et seq.* This clarification in the drawing figures would also have been clear to one of skill in the art from the specification as filed.

Claims 1-16 have been canceled and rewritten as new claims 17-32. The new claims correspond generally to the original claims but are drafted to distinguish between claims to the support device *per se* and those drawn to the combination (system). Support for the recitations in the new claims as to the **linear** expansion of the expander to cause the support device to be driven into

abutment against the rib that is transverse to the direction of linear expansion appears in Figs. 1 and 2 of the drawings when read in conjunction with the description in the specification at, for example, page 3, lines 12-26. Support for the recitations in claims 18-20 and 33-35 appears in Figs. 1 and 2 of the drawings when read in conjunction with the description in the specification at, for example, the last paragraph of page 2, and page 3, lines 12-26.

The claims as rewritten are respectfully believed to remove the bases for the claim objections appearing at pages 3-4 of the Official Action, and for the rejections under 37 USC 112, second paragraph, appearing at pages 4-5 of the Official Action. With specific respect to the Examiner's objection to the term "rib", Applicant respectfully submits that the term "rib" is a specific term in the mining industry used to refer to the substantially vertical rock face (i.e., wall) between the floor and the roof of a mining roadway. Accordingly, a person skilled in the design and construction of underground mining equipment would understand a "rib" to be, in layman's terms, equivalent to a wall. All claims as amended are respectfully believed to be sufficiently definite to satisfy the dictates of 35 USC 112, second paragraph.

With respect to the rejection under 35 USC 112, first paragraph, appearing at page 4 of the Official Action, Applicant respectfully submits that the specification as filed describes the claimed locking means at, for example, page 4, lines 7-14 in sufficient detail to enable one of skill in the art to practice the invention as claimed without undue experimentation. Accordingly, Applicant

respectfully submits that this rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12 and 13 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Schonfeld et al. Applicant respectfully notes that this rejection was not applied against the subject matter of claim 14, which has now been incorporated into new claim 27. This claim and the claims depending therefrom are accordingly respectfully believed to be free of the prior art rejection.

With respect to the other claims, Applicant respectfully notes that all of these claims now recite either an expander and/or linear expansion means (35 USC 112, sixth paragraph) that provide for a **linear** expansion that moves the resilient members away from each other in opposed directions, which opposed directions are transverse to the direction that the support device moves when the resilient members engage the respective floor and roof of a mining roadway. In contrast, the cited reference teaches a **circumferential** expansion of the support and thus teaches away from the claimed expander. In this connection, there would be no motivation or reason in the prior art to modify Schonfeld et al to arrive at the claimed invention since this would impermissibly change the principle of operation of the Schonfeld et al device or render it unsatisfactory for its intended purpose. See MPEP 2143.01(V) and (VI).

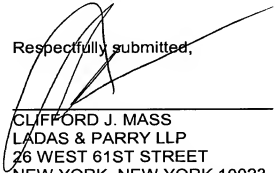
Indeed, the support device as claimed is designed for use in supporting a rib (i.e., wall) between a floor and a roof in a substantially rectangular

opening. This is in stark contrast to the support system taught in Schonfeld, which has been specifically developed for use in a substantially semi-circular gallery opening (which does not have distinct ribs and roofs). The device described in Schonfeld is not suitable for use within a substantially rectangular opening as would be required to satisfy the claim limitations.

Moreover, Schonfeld contains no disclosure of a resilient member that is able to be driven substantially vertically into engagement with a roof, as claimed. The device described in Schonfeld has both of its ends being driven into engagement with the floor only (see Schonfeld at Fig. 1). Finally, claims 20 and 35 recite a rib disposed perpendicular to the recited roof and floor, whereas Schonfeld does not even disclose a rib.

In view of the above, Applicant respectfully submits that all rejections and objections of record have been overcome and that the application is now in allowable form. An early notice of allowance is earnestly solicited and is believed to be fully warranted.

Respectfully submitted,



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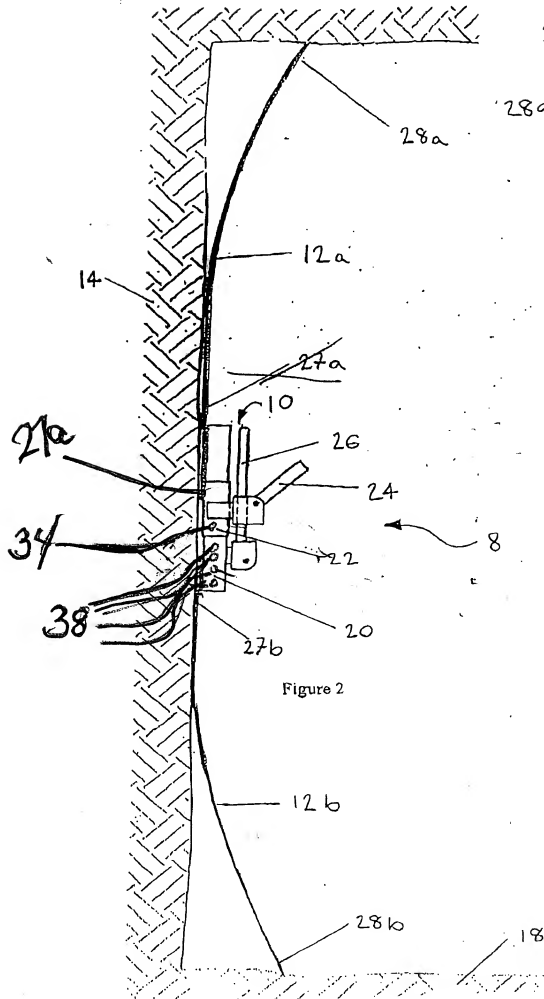


Figure 2

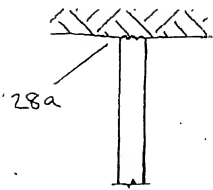


Figure 3

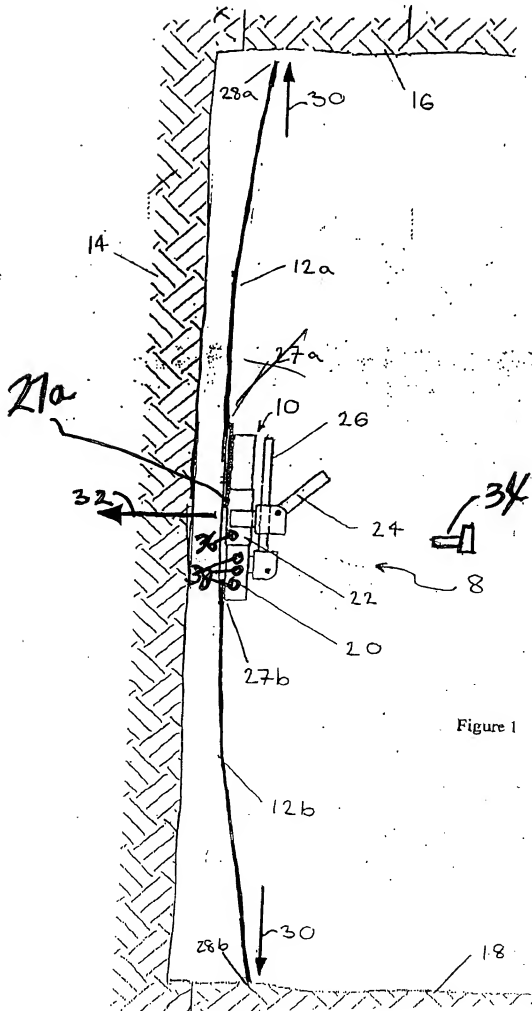


Figure 1